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SUBJECT: PANEL REPORT FORWARD-LEANING ON JAPAN'S DEFENSE POLICY

REF: A. TOKYO 1706
1B. TOKYO 1731
1C. TOKYO 1755

Classified By: James P. Zumwalt, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.; reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) A civilian expert panel charged with providing an independent assessment of Japan's defense and security capabilities will submit its final report to the Prime Minister's Office on August 4. The report is to be briefed immediately to the Cabinet Security Council and incorporated subsequently in the ongoing revisions to the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), contacts from the Cabinet Secretariat and the expert panel told the Embassy. Former Administrative Vice Minister of Defense Ken Sato, a panel member, and Cabinet Secretariat officials highlighted the report's forward-leaning recommendations on revising Japan's security strategy and policies, including policy changes allowing Japan to intercept ballistic missiles aimed at U.S. territory and U.S. Government assets, such as U.S. Navy vessels. The expert panel also calls for a review of the restrictions on arms exports and revisions to the legal criteria for dispatching JSDF personnel to peacekeeping operations (PKO) missions. The likelihood of wholesale implementation of the report's recommendations remains doubtful, however, due to Japan's fiscal constraints and a possible change in administration after the August 30 Lower House elections. The close resemblance between the panel's recommendations and the ruling party's "manifesto" of campaign pledges could embolden further the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) to scrutinize the report's recommendations if it comes to power. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) The Japanese government will revise the National Defense Program Guideline (NDPG), a comprehensive document outlining Japan's current defense capabilities and projected future needs, by the end of the year. As part of the NDPG process, the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities (CSDC), a civilian advisory panel charged with providing an independent assessment of Japan's future security requirements, will present its final report to the Prime Minister's Office on August 4. The report is to be reviewed by the Cabinet Security Council, comprising the Prime Minister, Chief Cabinet Secretary, Minister of Defense, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Chief of Japan Joint Staff. The report will be incorporated in the draft NDPG prior to Diet deliberations in the fall and in the final NDPG toward the end of the calendar year. Eminent security and foreign policy experts from industry, academia, and think tanks, including Waseda University Professor Chikako Ueki, former Japanese Ambassador to the United States Ryozo Kato, and former Administrative Vice Minister of Defense Ken Sato, make up the CSDC. Tokyo Electric Company Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata chairs the advisory panel.

RECOMMENDATION TO ALLOW JSDF PROTECTION OF U.S. INTERESTS

¶3. (C) Cabinet Secretariat Councilors for National Security and Crisis Management Kenichi Takahashi and Takaki Kawashima previewed for Embassy Tokyo on July 31 the gist of CSDC's report. The report, Kawashima explained, comprises three

chapters: Japan's new strategy for responding to changes in its security environment; a review of the role, functions, organizational structure, and infrastructure of the Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF); and, revisions to the basic principles of Japan's national security, including guidelines for international peace cooperation activities and Japanese responses to ballistic missile attacks. It contains a number of recommendations on revising Japan's security strategy and policies, including policy changes allowing Japan to intercept ballistic missiles aimed at U.S. Navy vessels and other U.S. Government assets. (Note: This recommendation challenges conventional interpretations of constitutional restrictions on collective self-defense. End Note.)

REVIEW OF 3PS, CRITERIA FOR PKO DISPATCHES

¶4. (C) The CSDC report also calls for a review of restrictions on arms exports and defense-related technology and equipment. (These restrictions have come at the expense of more effective bilateral cooperation with the United States, as well as the competitiveness of Japan's defense industries.) The report also surveys comprehensively Japan's security challenges from within the region as well as from global threats, calling for a "multi-layered" cooperative security strategy that combines Japan's efforts with those of allies and partners. Moreover, the panel recommends easing the legal and political criteria for dispatching JSDF personnel to peacekeeping operations (PKO).

AUG 30 ELECTIONS, BUDGET REMAIN CONCERNS

¶5. (C) Both Takahashi and Kawashima expressed concern, however, about the uncertainties posed by the August 30 Lower House elections and possible change in administration. While the NDPG will remain valid as official government policy for five years until the next review, it is also possible that a government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) could call for a revision of the new report or discard it completely, Takahashi said. The elections also call into question the timing of Diet deliberations on the draft NDPG,

which is currently slated for September. Finally, the Cabinet Councilors acknowledged that Japan's fiscal constraints posed tremendous challenges even if the government adopted the report's recommendations entirely.

TO PUT REPORT IN NDPG PROCESS PRIOR TO ELECTIONS

¶ 16. (C) In a separate meeting with Embassy officers on August 3, Institute for International Policy Studies Deputy Chairman (former Administrative Vice Minister of Defense) Ken Sato, a key panel member, noted that the panel had drafted the report anticipating the likely possibility of a major opposition victory in the August 30 Lower House elections. He had personally urged other panel members to submit the report to the Prime Minister's Office by June to ensure that the CSDC's recommendations would be incorporated into the NDPG process. He had also persuaded Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary Yanagisawa to brief the report immediately to the Cabinet Security Council after the CSDC presents it to the Prime Minister's Office on August 4. Sato denied whether any formal consultations took place between the panel and members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), whose "manifesto" of election pledges tracks closely with recommendations from the CSDC report. He suspected, however, that the timing is due in part to merging in the mind of Prime Minister Aso of the LDP's discussions, on one hand,

with the briefings on the status of the CSDC report by ACCS Yanagisawa, on the other.

STRIKING FOREIGN TARGETS, MORE FLEXIBLE JSDF

¶ 17. (C) Sato stressed that the JSDF remains prohibited by law to strike foreign targets unless an attack on Japan "commences," highlighting that the report does not recommend changes to Japan's policy on preemptive strikes per se. The key, Sato noted, is how the government defines "commences," citing the stacking and fueling of North Korean ballistic missiles as an example of a legally justifiable "commencement" of an attack on Japan. Sato also noted that implementing structural changes to the JSDF to become more "flexible" in its ability to react to unexpected crises expeditiously, along with joint training and exercises among the services, can act as "dynamic" deterrence in lieu of the traditional, "static" deterrence, which relies predominantly on U.S. security commitments and missile defense. The report, Sato added, also calls for revisions that would allow JSDF activities to transition "seamlessly" from peacetime to crises. Under the current legal framework, the JSDF is strictly governed by legislation that spell out specific situations allowing defense activities. This, Sato argued, keeps the JSDF from reacting flexibly and effectively to fast-changing situations. Moreover, Sato asserted, the current legal framework fails to address "gray areas," or security situations that are not spelled out precisely in individual laws.

INTENTIONALLY VAGUE ON REFERENCES TO CHINA

¶ 18. (C) Sato pointed out that the new report identifies key threat areas, whereas the previous NDPG did not elaborate on specific threats. The authors took care, however, to avoid excessive emphasis on China's military activities. As such, some of the language in the report is deliberately vague, Sato said. Sato (who personally advocated on behalf of anti-submarine capabilities during his tenure at the then-Japan Defense Agency) acknowledged that the report indirectly alludes to anti-submarine capabilities as it discusses intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and area-denial capabilities. This indirect approach reflects the panel's cognizance of Japan's sensitivities toward China.

¶9. (C) Comment: The close resemblance of the LDP's election platform (its "manifesto") and this report could diminish the influence of this panel's recommendations with the DPJ, which already seems disposed to scrutinize critically Japan's current defense policies. The extent to which the recommendations survive a potential DPJ-led government's review, as well as prospects for advancing the NDPG process, will become clearer after the August 30 elections. End Comment.

ZUMWALT